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I, Dr. Warren Smith of JETS: Japanese-English Technology Services, 27 Sandy Brook Drive, Durham, NH 03824 hereby declare and certify:

I am well acquainted with and knowledgeable regarding both the Japanese and English languages;

I am the translator of the attached English translation of Japanese Unexamined Patent Application Publication S62-6493, attached to this certification and e-mailed on 7/13/2006 to Attorney Joseph Baldwin (joseph.baldwin@wilmerhale.com).

To the best of my knowledge and belief, the attached English translation is a true, correct, accurate and complete translation.

I further declare and certify that all statements made herein of my own knowledge are true and that all statements made on information and belief are believed to be true; and further that these statements were made with the knowledge that willful false statements and the like so made are punishable by fine or imprisonment, or both, under 18 U.S.C. § 1001.

Pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1746, I declare and certify under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct.

Date: 7/13/2006

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Warren W. Smith", is written over a horizontal line.

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(54) Title of the invention	WRITABLE/ERASABLE SEMICONDUCTOR MEMORY DEVICE	
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SPECIFICATION

1. Title of the Invention

Writable/Erasable Semiconductor Memory Device

2. Scope of Patent Claims

(1) A semiconductor memory device comprising writeable/erasable memory transistors, wherein:

a write circuit is provided with a circuit for selecting one writing voltage level from a plurality of writing voltage levels that correspond to a plurality of data, and applying [said selected one writing voltage] to a memory transistor; and wherein

a read circuit is provided with a comparator circuit that compares an output from a memory transistor to a plurality of reference levels, and provided with a circuit for determining data recorded in the memory transistor based on an output from the comparator circuit, so that multiple bits of data are stored in a single memory transistor.

(2) A writeable/erasable semiconductor memory device as set forth in Claim 1, wherein said reference levels are stored at the same time as the data storage in memory transistors of the same type as the memory transistors for data storage.

3. Detailed Explanation of the Invention

(Field of Technology)

The present invention relates to writable/erasable semiconductor memory devices that use EPROMs or EEPROMs as memory transistors.

(Prior Art)

When EPROMs or EEPROMs are used as memory transistors, normally a single bit of data is stored in a single memory transistor. Because of this, there is a problem that memory chips become large when attempts are made to create semiconductor memory with a large capacity.

On the other hand, in the field of maskd ROMs, there are those wherein the threshold values for the memory transistors are controlled to a plurality of levels so as to store multiple bits of data in a single memory transistor. However, the mechanism for writing in EPROMs and EEPROMs, and the like, is completely different, and the threshold values in EPROMs and EEPROMs have not been controlled to multiple levels.

(Object)

The object of the present invention is to provide a memory device that uses EPROMs or EEPROMs as memory transistors, wherein the degree of integration in the memory device is improved through storing multiple bits worth of data in a single memory transistor.

(Constitution)

The semiconductor memory device according to the present invention is provided with a memory transistor that can be written to and erased, wherein the write circuit thereof is provided with a circuit that selects, and applies to a memory transistor, one writing voltage level from among a plurality of different writing voltage levels, corresponding to a plurality of data, and wherein the readout circuit is provided with a comparator circuit for comparing the output from the memory transistor to a plurality of reference levels, and provided with a circuit for determining, based on the output of the comparator, the recorded data in the memory transistor, where multiple bits worth of data are stored in a single memory transistor.

For the EPROM, a FAMOS-type device, or example, may be used, or for an EEPROM, a FAMOS-type or MNOS-type device, for example, may be used.

The write characteristics of the EPROM or EEPROM are dependent on the writing voltage when writing (the control gate voltage and the drain voltage). Given this, changing the writing voltage makes it possible to record a plurality of bit data in a single memory transistor.

An example of embodiment will be explained in detail below.

As one example, the case wherein two bits worth of data are written to a single memory transistor will be explained.

The threshold value V_{th} after writing to an EPROM or EEPROM varies as shown in Fig. 1 with the control gate voltage V_{cg} , that is the writing voltage. That is, the higher the voltage for the control gate voltage V_{cg} , the higher the voltage level of the threshold value V_{th} after writing.

Fig. 2 illustrates the writing circuit part in an example of embodiment.

2 is a memory transistor, where [such memory transistors] are arranged in the form of a array, and can be selected, when reading or writing, by an X and a Y decoder (not shown). 4 is a control gate voltage selecting circuit for selecting one of four different voltage levels: V_{cg1} , V_{cg2} , V_{cg3} , or V_{cg4} . 6 is a decoder into which two bits of data $D1$ and $D2$ are inputted, where one of the voltage levels is selected by the control gate voltage selecting circuit 4 by the output signal of this decoder 6 and applied as the control gate voltage of the memory transistor 2. The control gate voltage selecting circuit 4 and the decoder 6 together form a circuit that is capable of selecting, and applying to a memory transistor, one writing voltage from multiple writing voltages, corresponding to multiple data.

Control gate voltages are selected as shown in the table below, for example, for the two bits of digital data $D1$ and $D2$:

Data		Control Gate Voltage
D1	D2	
0	0	V_{cg1}
0	1	V_{cg2}
1	0	V_{cg3}
1	1	V_{cg4}

When it comes to the reading out of data that is stored in this way, it is possible to readout using the same readout circuit as in the case wherein multibit data is stored in a single memory transistor in a masked ROM. That is, for the threshold values V_{th1} , V_{th2} , V_{th3} and V_{th4} [for multibit data] recorded using the four different control gate voltages V_{cg1} , V_{cg2} , V_{cg3} and V_{cg4} , the respective intermediate values V_{r1} , V_{r2} , and V_{r3} are established as reference threshold voltages, and the memory threshold values for the memory transistors can be readout by comparisons thereto. (See Fig. 3.)

In the case of EPROMs or EEPROMs, the write level will change somewhat, albeit little, over time due to the storage characteristics of the write data, which is not the case for masked ROMs. Given this, the circuit shown in Fig. 4 is used as the readout circuit.

In Fig. 4, 8-1, 8-2, and 8-3 are reference transistors for storing the reference voltages V_{r1} , V_{r2} , and V_{r3} , and use the same type of EPROMs or EEPROMs as the memory transistor 2. The same readout voltages are applied to the reference transistors 8-1, 8-2, and 8-3 as to the selected memory transistor 2.

10-1, 10-2, and 10-3 are comparator circuits. The comparator circuit 10-1 inputs the output current of the memory transistor 2 and the output current of the reference transistor 8-1, comparator circuit 10-2 inputs the output current of the memory transistor 2 and the output current of the reference transistor 8-2, and the comparator circuit 10-3 inputs the output current of the memory transistor 2 and the output current of the reference transistor 8-3, and each [comparator circuit] convert to voltages.

12 is an encoder that inputs the output signals of the comparators 10-1, 10-2, and 10-3, and outputs the 2-bit digital data D1 and D2. The encoder 12 corresponds to the circuit for determining the recorded data of the memory transistor .

In storing the reference threshold value voltages V_{r1} , V_{r2} , and V_{r3} in the reference transistors 8-1, 8-2, and 8-3, these voltages V_{r1} , V_{r2} , and V_{r3} are set in advance using wafer processes or circuits, and the threshold voltages of the reference transistors 8-1, 8-2, and 8-3 are written to the same levels as the respective V_{r1} , V_{r2} , and V_{r3} . The writing of these reference threshold value voltages is performed at the same time as the writing of the data to the memory transistors 2.

Given the present example of embodiment, the reference threshold value voltages V_{r1} , V_{r2} , and V_{r3} are recorded in the reference transistors 8-1, 8-2, and 8-3, wherein changes over time will occur along with [those changes] in the memory transistors 2, thus making it possible to absorb the changes over time when reading out, making it possible to readout with stability.

While in the example of embodiment, a decoder 6 was used in the write circuit, a multiplexer may be used instead of a decoder.

(Effects)

The present invention makes it possible to record multibit data in a single memory transistor such as an EPROM or an EEPROM, thus making it possible to increase the density of the memory device and thus possible to increase the memory capacity of a chip of a given size.

4. Simple Explanation of Drawings

Fig. 1 is a diagram illustrating the relationship between the EPROM or EEPROM write control gate voltage and the threshold value after writing; Fig. 2 is a block diagram illustrating the write circuit block in a first example of embodiment; Fig. 3 is a figure illustrating the relationship between the threshold value after writing and the reference threshold value voltage; and Fig. 4 is a block diagram illustrating the readout circuit block in an example of embodiment.

2: Memory transistor

4: Control gate voltage selecting circuit

6: Decoder

8-1, 8-2, 8-3: Reference transistors

10-1, 10-2, 10-3: Comparator circuits

12: Encoder

Agent: Patent Attorney NOGUCHI, Shigeo

Fig. 1

[VERTICAL AXIS]: Threshold value after writing
[HORIZONTAL AXIS]: Control gate voltage

Fig. 2

6: Decoder

4: Control gate voltage selecting circuit

2: Memory transistor

Fig. 3

Fig. 4

8-1: Reference transistor

2: Memory transistor

12: Encoder

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⑤ 公開特許公報(A) 昭62-6493

⑥ Int. Cl.⁴ 識別記号 庁内整理番号 ⑦ 公開 昭和62年(1987)1月13日
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審査請求 未請求 発明の数 1 (全4頁)

⑧ 発明の名称 書き込みと消去が可能な半導体メモリ装置

⑨ 特 願 昭60-143017

⑩ 出 願 昭和60(1985)6月29日

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明 細 書

1. 発明の要約

書き込みと消去が可能な半導体メモリ装置

2. 特許請求の範囲

(1) 書き込みと消去が可能なメモリトランジスタを有した半導体メモリ装置において、

書き込み回路には複数の情報に対応して複数の電位の書き込み電圧レベルから1個の書き込み電圧レベルを選択してメモリトランジスタに印加する回路を備え、

読出し回路にはメモリトランジスタからの出力を複数の電圧レベルと対応する比較回路及びその比較回路の出力を基にしてメモリトランジスタの記憶情報を判定する回路を備えることにより、メモリトランジスタに蓄積ビット分の情報を記憶させることを特徴とする書き込みと消去が可能な半導体メモリ装置。

(2) 前記電圧レベルは複数の記憶用のメモリトランジスタと対応する1個のメモリトランジスタに

ンジスタと対応するメモリトランジスタに情報記憶と同時に記憶されたものである特許請求の範囲第1項に記載の書き込みと消去が可能な半導体メモリ装置。

3. 発明の詳細な説明

(技術分野)

本発明はメモリROMやEEPROMをメモリトランジスタとする書き込みと消去が可能な半導体メモリ装置に関するものである。

(従来技術)

EEPROMやEEPROMをメモリトランジスタとする場合、通常は1個のメモリトランジスタに対して1ビットの情報を記憶させている。そのため、大量の半導体メモリ装置を形成しようとするとメモリチップが次々大きくなる問題がある。

一方、マスクROMの分野においては、イオン注入法によりメモリトランジスタのしきい値を複数のレベルに制御し、1個のメモリトランジスタに

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電 V_{th1} 、 V_{th2} 、 V_{th3} 、 V_{th4} に等し、それぞれの中点値 V_{th1} 、 V_{th2} 、 V_{th3} を基準しきい電圧として設定し、比較することによりメモリトランジスタの駆動しきい値を読み分けることができる（図 3 参照）。

EPROM や EPROM の場合、マスク ROM と異なり、書き込みがあるが書き込み後の保持特性として書き込みレベルの経時変化がある。そこで、読み出し回路として第 4 図の回路を用いる。

第 4 図において、8-1、8-2、8-3 は読み出しきい電圧 V_{th1} 、 V_{th2} 、 V_{th3} を記憶する基準トランジスタであり、メモリトランジスタ 2 と同様の EPROM や EPROM を使用する。選択されたメモリトランジスタ 2 と基準トランジスタ 8-1、8-2、8-3 に共通の読み出し電圧が印加される。

10-1、10-2、10-3 は比較回路であり、比較回路 10-1 はメモリトランジスタ 2 の出力電流と基準トランジスタ 8-1 の出力電流とを入力し、比較回路 10-2 はメモリトランジスタ

2 の出力電流と基準トランジスタ 8-2 の出力電流とを入力し、比較回路 10-3 はメモリトランジスタ 2 の出力電流と基準トランジスタ 8-3 の出力電流とを入力し、それぞれ電圧に変換して比較する。

12 は比較回路 10-1、10-2、10-3 の出力信号を入力し、2 ビットのデジタル情報 D_1 、 D_2 を出力するエンコーダである。エンコーダ 12 はメモリトランジスタの記憶情報を判定する回路に対応している。

基準トランジスタ 8-1、8-2、8-3 に記憶しきい電圧 V_{th1} 、 V_{th2} 、 V_{th3} を記憶するには、電圧 V_{th1} 、 V_{th2} 、 V_{th3} をウエハポテンシャルに、又は回路により与え固定しておく。基準トランジスタ 8-1、8-2、8-3 のしきい電圧がそれぞれこれらの電圧 V_{th1} 、 V_{th2} 、 V_{th3} と同レベルになるまで書き込む。書き込みしきい電圧の書き込みはメモリトランジスタ 2 に情報を書き込むときに同時に与える。

本実施例によれば、メモリトランジスタ 2 とともに駆動電圧を印加する基準トランジスタ 8-1、8-2、8-3 に記憶しきい電圧 V_{th1} 、 V_{th2} 、 V_{th3} を記憶させているので、読み出し時の経時変化を吸収することができる、安定な読み出しを行うことができる。

本例では書き込み回路でデコーダ 6 を使用しているが、デコーダに代えてマルチプレクサを使用することもできる。

〈附図〉

本発明によれば、1 個の EPROM や EPROM のメモリトランジスタに複数のビット分の情報を記憶させることができるので、メモリ回路の歩留まりが向上し、同一サイズのチップのメモリ性能を向上させることができる。

4. 図面の簡単な説明

第 1 図は EPROM や EPROM の書き込みコ

ントロールゲート電圧と書き込みのしきい値との関係を示す図、第 2 図は本実施例における書き込み回路を示すブロック図、第 3 図は書き込みのしきい値と基準しきい電圧との関係を示す図、第 4 図は本実施例における読み出し回路を示すブロック図である。

2 --- メモリトランジスタ、

4 --- コントロールゲート電圧選択回路、

6 --- デコーダ、

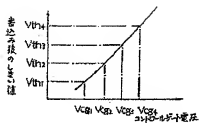
8-1、8-2、8-3 --- 基準トランジスタ、

10-1、10-2、10-3 --- 比較回路、

12 --- エンコーダ、

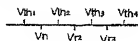
代理人 弁護士 野口健雄

第1図

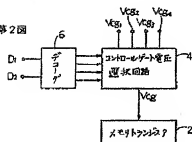


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第3図



第2図



第4図

